



Annual Project Evaluation and Accomplishment Report Form

Project: School Garden Clubs (2018-2019 school year)

Date: June 2019

Project Overview: (updated text from VMS description)

The Jackson-Via and Clark Elementary School Garden Clubs provide the opportunity for Piedmont Master Gardener (PMG) volunteers to promote hands-on learning about gardening for elementary school children. The project partners with the City Schoolyard Garden (CSG) program and focuses on: a) cultivating children's gardening skills, b) providing experiential learning opportunities, c) promoting health & fitness, and d) nurturing social & cultural development. PMGs use research-based practices to educate youth about gardening.

Brief Accomplishment/Evaluation Strategy Report:

(Include approximate number of people served)

The school garden clubs met weekly for seven to eight weeks in the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019. At Jackson-Via Elementary, 7 Piedmont Master Gardeners (PMGs) volunteered in the fall and 6 in the spring. At Clark Elementary, 8 PMGs volunteered in the fall and 6 in the spring. Both clubs met the overall goal of promoting a love of gardening for a diverse group of elementary school children through hands-on experiences in the garden. Evaluation results for each of the three main project objectives are summarized below.

The first objective was to serve between 10-15 children from schools with high percentages of children who qualify for free or reduced price lunch or with diverse racial and ethnic groups. The Jackson-Via club met this objective as a total of 47 students participated in the club (31 in the fall and 16 in the spring). The students were ethnically and racially diverse; 23 (49%) of the students were Black or African-American, 22 (47%) were White and 2 (4%) were Asian. Of the White students, 8 (36%) were Hispanic.

The group of children in the Clark club was different each week. Garden Club participants were recruited from the CLASS After School Program. Each week, the children were allowed to choose whether to attend garden club or other activities. This arrangement resulted in variable attendance. In the fall, the weekly attendance ranged from 5 to 20 children with an average of 11 children each week. Weekly attendance in the spring ranged from 8 to 15; with an average of 11 children each week. However, one session (beekeeper's visit) was done with the entire CLASS program of 20 children. Among the students from the CLASS Program who attended the fall and spring Garden Clubs, an average of 4 children were Black or African-American. These youngsters participated at various times during the fifteen sessions.

The second objective was to provide healthy snacks and to encourage the children to try healthy snack options. At Jackson-Via each PMG volunteer supplied a healthy snack for one club meeting in the fall and spring. At Clark snacks were not served in the fall but were in the spring. Snacks included fruits (e.g., clementines, apples, strawberries) or vegetables (e.g., carrots, celery, red pepper). The spring clubs concluded with a salad party where students made a salad from vegetables they grew in the garden. Students reported eating fruits or vegetables that they had never tried before; those most frequently mentioned were clementines, peppers, radishes, herbs (parsley, thyme, lemon balm,) and grape tomatoes.

The third objective was for children in the school garden club to exhibit a love of gardening and to learn gardening concepts through active participation in hands-on gardening activities. PMG volunteers from Clark and Jackson-Via had a joint meeting to plan for lesson

topics prior to the fall and spring clubs. Students at Jackson-Via and Clark were able to participate in a wide variety of activities that provided hands-on experiences.

Examples of fall club activities conducted at one or both clubs included:

- learning about the plant life cycle by planting and caring for vegetable seeds and seedlings and harvesting them
- observing the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly and planting milkweed seeds as a host plant for Monarch butterflies
- learning about the importance of insects by observing insects in different stages of growth and doing a “bug sweep” outdoors using nets to catch bugs
- learning about tree parts and the difference between deciduous and evergreen trees
- learning how to plant and care for trees by planting native trees (dogwood and sassafras) on the school nature trail
- planting flower bulbs (tulips and daffodils) in the beds in front of the school
- learning why and how to save seeds from vegetables and flowers
- learning about the value of a cover crop by planting cover crops in the garden
- grinding wheat and other grains in a mill to make flour and then using the flour to make pancakes
- learning about herbs and planting herbs in a pot to take home

Examples of spring club activities implemented at one or both of the clubs included:

- planting seeds or seedlings (each child had his or her own plot in the garden) and harvesting the vegetables to make a salad as well as bringing bags of produce home after the last session
- maintaining a chart of temperature, rainfall, weather conditions and activities weekly
- learning about soil improvement by making a batch of compost and adding mature compost to garden beds prior to planting
- taking a nature hike scavenger hunt to locate objects (e.g., tallest tree, fungi, fern)
- learning about the difference between native and invasive plants by walking on the nature trail to find tags marking these types of plants
- planting kale and sunflowers
- planting sweet potato slips to harvest in the fall
- planting highbush blueberry shrubs in the native flower bed
- learning facts about bees and the importance of bees as pollinators through hands-on activities from local beekeepers
- learning how to care for flowers by decorating a flower pot and planting an annual flower to take home as a gift for Mother’s Day (or as a gift for another family member)
- observing the life cycle of a painted lady butterfly and releasing butterflies in the garden
- learning about host plants for butterflies and transplanting a mountain mint from the native plant garden to take home
- maintaining an herb garden, tasting and smelling herbs
- inspecting plants for pest and disease issues and learning about beneficial insects (e.g., observing ladybug larvae and adults attacking aphids on strawberries)

Photos documenting the children’s involvement in these activities were uploaded to albums on the PMG Flickr site.

Student Evaluation Results

The student evaluation results from both clubs were positive. Jackson-Via student evaluations indicated that a majority (89%) of the students loved gardening. A smaller percentage (11%) rated gardening as “OK. The evaluations results also indicated that students increased their knowledge about gardening. Most students (67%) reported not knowing much or only some about gardening before garden club. The majority of students (87%) noted that after garden club they knew a lot about gardening; a smaller percentage (13%) said they knew some about gardening.

Clark student evaluation results indicated that all (100%) of the children loved gardening. A majority of students (65%) said they knew a lot about gardening before the club started with 35% indicating that they only knew “some” or “not much” about gardening prior to participating in Garden Club. At the conclusion of Garden Club, all (100%) of children indicated that they knew “a lot” about gardening.

Students from Clark and Jackson-Via commented about a variety of concepts they learned in the fall and spring garden clubs. The most frequently mentioned concepts were about how to garden and about insects. Exemplary comments about gardening included: *how to plant, what plants need, how to grow things, planting seeds, watering and harvesting.* Exemplary comments about bugs included that they knew *all about bugs* and *bugs are part of nature.*

Are the Project Objectives and Goals being met? **Yes**

Comments, updates or suggested amendments

Clark Club

This year we tried something new. Each child was given their own individual plot in the garden to plant, care for and harvest. The children were thrilled to care for the vegetables in their plot, to watch them grow and to harvest them. This was the first year since the club started at Clark that the children were able to harvest vegetables. This was due in part to starting the garden club later in the spring when the weather was warmer. It was also due to planning ahead to make sure we had seedlings in addition to seeds for the children to plant and selecting crops that would mature within the time frame of the garden club. We will continue to follow this plan in the future.

Jackson-Via Club:

The Jackson-Via club also started later in the spring and gave each child his or her own plot in the garden to care for and harvest. We will continue to implement this plan in the future.

Due to the large number of children (31) who were interested in the fall 2018 garden club, we piloted a new schedule where we will had two four week sessions rather than one eight week session. Fifteen children participated in the first session and 16 in the second session. We decided that this was not ideal as children did not get to observe the growth of the seeds and seedlings they planted and were not able to harvest the vegetables. Therefore in the spring, although 25 students applied for the club, we limited enrollment to 16. The CSG held a separate garden club on another day for 9 students. While this is not ideal either, it did allow the students in the spring club to plant care for and harvest their vegetables and provided a better learning experience for them. We will need to continue to explore alternatives next year. One possible option would be to accept applications in the fall and then assign children to either fall or spring. Another option would be to limit enrollment to children who have not been in the club before.

Budget Requests for the upcoming year:

We requested a total of \$800.00 for the 2019 PMG budget year (\$400.00 for the spring of 2019 and \$400.00 for the fall of 2019) to be used by both clubs. We plan to request a similar amount for the 2020 budget.

Project Coordinator Commitment page signed and attached and Dated

Submitted by: Mary Voorhees and Ralph Morini

Date: June 10, 2019

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Approved X Unapproved

Notes:

MG Coordinator, date Scott Boven 11/26/2019